

At the beginning of the 1980's, New York was to begin a period of post-academic corporate surge of developments, largely sponsored by the public authorities.



STOREFRONT, however, has never just filled a void or merely provided a service to others. Its benevolence must be seen in a different way. The open-ended agenda of the place somehow converged upon a terrain of the spirit of invention. The possibilities of the Social, the Formal, the Critical, all enrol as service operations in the contemporary discourse of Architecture. This terrain, occupied at one end, perhaps, by the institutionalization of Michael Webb's exhibition of 1989, and at the other by Zvi Hecker's openly expressionist work in his 1989 exhibition, is formed by associations and disjunctive conditions alike.

Personally, I have always viewed STOREFRONT as a tool, almost as a piece of technology whose power supply is almost unlimited. The potency of a tool is based on its use, its direction and where it is pointed. We should not breathe a sigh of relief that STOREFRONT <sup>very</sup> exists. It should be used, with the direction of Part and his staff and by serious Architects, for the goal of independent communication. A continuance of the previous eight years of proposal and ongoing work.

NEIL M. DENARI, TOKYO

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## Storefront Decade

Dennis L. Dollens

In 1982, a few blocks from SoHo was a long way from chic. Spillover development, galleries and trendy restaurants had not even begun to line the section of Broadway from Houston to Canal streets--let alone spread east across Prince or Spring. New York's principal commercial architectural gallery, Max Protetch, was still up in midtown on 57 Street. Postmodernism had not yet basked in its Warholean 15 minutes of fame, Reganomics had not yet devastated the American social system, and it looked like yuppies just might rule New York's money and nightlife. In such an atmosphere of private greed, individual indulgence, and designer teapots, the emergence of a privately-founded, socially conscious, politically concerned, financially strapped gallery for art, architecture, and performance would seem almost impossible. Almost. Yet, in September 1982, The Storefront for Art and Architecture, founded only five months earlier by architect Kyong Park and artist R. L. Seltman, opened its doors at 51 Prince Street in the Little Italy section of Manhattan--a few blocks from SoHo though philosophically a world apart.

This first Storefront expressed optimism in the arts and, at the same time, dissent from the norms of the day. The gallery had no commitment to a mission; its intention was to "keep up with the times." With Seltman's curating "Performance A-Z" and Storefront's first exhibition, "Gowanus Canal Redefined," the gallery opened with an art bent. Park stresses this aspect. From his perspective, artists, used to dealing with alternatives--spaces, presentations, collaborations, mediums--could lead, point



out alternatives to the more conservatively based architectural and design community. And architecture could become more activist vis-a-vis a close relationship to avant garde art.

By presenting art and architecture for their inherent value and message, the gallery began to challenge the public. With that involvement it began deriving--leveraging art into dialogue--the ability to engage the community. In effect, Storefront subverted traditional art environments--commercial galleries, art administrators, curators--; it became a guerilla gallery positioning itself to fill a void, expose a fringe, and talk back to New York's established, static, and comatose design establishment.

From Storefront's begining in the Prince Street tenement, the tiny commercial ground-floor storefront served as a namesake, gallery, living space for Kyong Park, and then, slowly, as a meeting place for architects, designers, and artists to exchange information. At 51 Prince the mold was set for Storefront's intellectual and political openness, its receptivity to new ideas, work, and unknown artists. Here it charted its future course with a stubbornness that continues to inform an increasing range of activities. This determination solidified long before today's avant garde lent support, before today's practitioners seized upon Storefront as a stylistic early-warning system--and before today's grudging and sporatic recognition from established publications and associations in what Peter Cook terms "studied ignoring."

Storefront's first years found Kyong Park dealing with the gallery "not as a job but as a life." (It still is.) Successive

artists, architects, designers, and even the co-founder and later co-directors moved through the nascent gallery. Seltman's departure was followed by Todd Ayong's joining Park as co-director and then by Glenn Weiss's taking on the position. All contributed in this period studded with important small exhibitions of new work by artists and architects such as Dan Coma, Balch and Baratloo, Lebbeus Woods, Rebecca Martin, Neil Denari, and Bart Prince. One particularly intriguing and beautiful exhibition, atypical for Storefront in its museum-like installation, offered small model structures, aerodynamically designed--all purportedly airworthy--by the Manhattan-based artist Stephen Pearson.

Storefront slowly organized itself during these formative years, though more in the sense of a network of like-concerned artist/activists who saw the role of the gallery chiefly as an instrument of social/artistic change rather than as a traditional commercial, academic, or professional organization. A group in Park's words with, "no set role" and who, like Park, thought of "civil interests contributing to something larger than oneself." This loose organization affiliated itself financially with The Cultural Council Foundation, thus qualifying Storefront for tax-exempt contributions, and, more importantly, national and state funding. From this point on Storefront was eligible for support from individuals, foundations, corporations, and government; yet, because of its activist nature and non-traditional framework, little money was forthcoming. Storefront continued to survive primarily on money from Park's architectural freelance work and on small, project-specific subsidies from the New York State



Council on the Arts.

Two exhibition formats devised, developed, and implemented in these years stuck with Storefront, becoming central programming features, almost hallmarks: theme-based invitationals and open calls. For example, "After the Tilted Arc" responded to the controversy of removing Richard Serra's commissioned sculpture from its public setting; "Before Whitney" presented 70 artist and architect responses to Michael Graves's proposed alterations to Marcel Breuer's Whitney Museum; "Project DMZ" presented theoretical new uses for the demilitarized zone between North Korea and South Korea; and "Project Atlas" sought ideas to transform those obsolete artifacts of the nuclear age, the Atlas Missile silos. Continuing this series, artist Marc Blane conceived 1991's invitational, "Empty Pedestals Project," which seeks to develop new strategies and suggestions for reusing old and abandoned statue pedestals in Manhattan's public spaces. Mostly neo-classical bases--stripped of their sculpture--they are urban remnants of former, forgotten times (the benign kin to the Atlas silos). Today's artists are called "to initiate a dialogue through new works that respond to the pedestals and their sites while considering city form for the next century."

Hard-hitting exhibitions have been a staple of Storefront, but in the mid-80s its gloves-off exhibitions first produced citywide responses. With unusually broad media attention Storefront took on New York City planning, zoning, and politicians when in 1984 it attempted to save Adam Purple's Garden of Eden. Purple had created a garden on the site of a burned-out tenement on the Lower East Side--an oasis in the slums, built from

recycled bricks, wood, and soil composted with manure collected from horse-drawn cabs in Central Park. When the city wanted to destroy his garden in order to build insensitively sited housing and to locate a "new" (i.e. non-Purple) garden across the street, Storefront called out to over 100 architects to design alternative housing that incorporated Purple's paradise and the much needed housing. It received responses from around the world, exhibited them, and negotiated with the city. Finally, however, no compromise could be worked out with Purple and his garden was lost.

Storefront followed with a street action and series of three exhibitions dealing with the homeless. On October 14, 1985 the New York Daily News featured a photograph of protest marchers on 5th Avenue with an accompanying headline GRAFFITI FOR GOOD CAUSE: STREET ART A PLEA FOR HOMELESS. This march of more than 100 artists, some carrying a huge banner, was orchestrated with a campaign of spray-painted stencil graffiti (tags) on New York streets. Areas intensively selected for tagging were among those least affected by homelessness, one, the expensive shopping district of midtown. (Park himself stenciled the sidewalk outside the revolving doors of the Museum of Modern Art.)

The march was followed with an exhibition of 200 stencils designed around the theme "Homeless at Home" exhibited in the gallery. Next, in March 1986, the gallery opened an art and architecture exhibition of proposals to deal with the homeless. At the time Architectural Record noted that "ideas prevailed over images," and Michael Sorkin stated in The Village Voice: "The most 'beautiful' artifact is a shelter constructed by Pfau and



Jones out of the detritus of industrial civilization (old cars, planes, trains, etc.) in which to house the human detrius of industrial civilization." From outrageous to pracatical the proposals tried to stimulate viewers and effect change. A fanciful one presented a ransom note for the Hudson River-based aircraft carrier Intrepid. The note read: "We have your aricraft carrier. It makes great shelter for over 6,000 homeless people."

These exhibitions gave the gallery a heightened, if temporary, degree of media visibility. Sorkin stated in The Village Voice that Storefront "has stepped into the nearly total vacuum of irresponsibility created by mainline architectural culture and asserted itself in the vanguard of the local architectural conscience." Douglas C. McGill followed in The New York Times, declaring that Storefront "has over the last two years been nearly alone in the art world for its sustained and forthright tackling of the issue of New York City's homeless".

By this time Storefront was nearing the most significant occurances since it founding--a new gallery presence, the departure of a co-director, and the occupation of a new space. In the summer of 1986 Glenn Weiss left for work in Seattle. Weiss's preceeding years had been pivotal. From "Adam's House in Paradise" through the series of homeless exhibitions and general programming, he brought people together and helped developed the gallery. Before departing his last acts were scouting Storefront's second space and participating in its opening two exhibitions. At approximately the same time, artist Shirin Neshat became an unofficial advisor to Park and Storefront. Neshat had been one of the organizers of the original homeless show and

would soon become instrumental in organizational development and programming, bringing a strong voice for greater participation by women and minority artists. This phase of growth culminated when Storefront relocated two blocks south at its present location.

97 Kenmare Street is an acute trapezoid in plan, but perceptually it's a triangle. The interior exhibition space tapers to a thin wall of only 60 centimeters, creating the illusion of a long, diminishing perspective, a vanishing point. This unique space is punctuated by four exposed-steel, riveted columns that stab the room with a vital stacatto. Here, in January 1986 Storefront made its new home, opening with an exhibit of work by Dan Graham and followed with a third homeless show.

The year's previous move to Kenmare Street had witnessed Storefront's growth from a tiny activist gallery to an organization with incipient city, state, national, and international influence. Professionals dealing with art, design, and architecture began to watch its activities seriously as the gallery introduced the work of unknown locals and the never-seen work of young or neglected international artists and architects. Collaborations were initiated to schedule lectures and presentations by visiting architects at nearby schools of architecture--to spread the word to Cooper Union, Columbia, Pratt, Parsons, City University of New York, etc.; exhibitions were planned to travel; discussion groups were initiated; and the Front series of publications begun. With the move to Kenmare Street, Storefront not only increased its gallery space, it solidified its position as a center of art/architecture



communication. And it did so without losing its activist nature or the ability to function as a foil to the established art/architecture hierarchy.

Increased activity was executed with volunteer effort, through the assistance of active board members (some associated with the gallery from the beginning), and often with the donated efforts of exhibiting artists and architects. Still, the bulk of administrative responsibility, fundraising, artistic vision, overall guidance, and implementation lay with Park and Neshat. Their complementary personal styles, one visionary, abrupt, and discursive--the other soothing, pragmatic, and diplomatic, set Storefront's tone as it moved from mid-1980's to the close of the decade.

Fast-paced growth--too much activity with too little time and money--left some projects stalled, some artists with ruffled nerves, and many people questioning whether Storefront could survive. Yet, as the last years of the 1980s witnessed, Storefront rocketed. It set new standards for architectural exhibitions in New York, opening the gallery to work that challenged prevailing styles, politics, and professional norms. It showed new, unknown, forgotten, and neglected works more intensively and from a greater geographic range than ever. Often with budgets so thin that they had to be patched over with funds from the nearly non-existent general operating kitty.

Storefront had always struggled (and still does) with funding. Now with new gallery space and a more visible location it was poised to enter the government and corporate world of fundraising more aggressively. This change, like the physical

move from Prince to Kenmare streets, brought on a fundamental expansion: the presence of Jane Dodds. Dodds, an artist/writer, joined Storefront in 1987 as a volunteer engaged in producing publications, advising on strategies and approaches for fundrasing, and organizing "Project DMZ". In brief time her skills, complementary to Park and Neshat's, made clear that she functioned integrally and her volunteer role became that of a full-time staff member.

A staff of three in place, the co-directors continue working with the evolving boards of directors and advisors (Cliff Balch, Lucio Pozzi, ~~Lebbeus Woods~~ <sup>stet</sup>, ~~Frederick Ted Castle~~ <sup>stet</sup>, Elizabeth Diller, ~~Bridget Olive Brown~~ <sup>leave out</sup>, Moji Baratloo, Dan Graham, Michael Sorkin, James Wines, Buff Kavelman, Richard Plunz, Nam June Paik, ~~Patricia Phillips~~ <sup>stet</sup>, and Richard Haas, <sup>Toyo Ito, Chris Dercon</sup> <sup>1</sup> to name some of the most active current and former voices). From this group's suggestions and contacts (Woods, for example, was instrumental in bringing in new Europeans, especially from the AA), mixed with those of Park, Neshat, and Dodds, artists/architects get discussed, works looked at, and decisions made that determined who will be invited to exhibit. In addition, the staff, working with smaller, specialized committees or consultants, produces lectures, presentations, discussions, newsletters, and catalogues. Seeing to the organization and production of two of these activities are sculptor Stephen Korns (initially with Neil Denari), who directs public discussions, and architect David Hanawalt, who directs graphics for Storefront's pulp newsletters.

Despite impressive forays into publishing from its earliest days, the gallery's publication program has mostly sputtered



along. Its most consistent production, the newsletter, carries news and graphics reflecting programs and activities along with brief essays and letters; its well-liked format and cheap production values reflect the gallery's low-budget existence and activist concerns. The graphics and production are intentionally contra-slick, opposing glossy, high-end print-media like coffee-table books, magazines, and announcements from commercial galleries. Bridging the gap between the calendar-based newsletter and the need for broader documentation is a catalogue/monograph series called Front. Park describes it as "a collaborative production, lead by the artists and architects whose work is presented, with the aim of expressing the unique character of the work itself." He further notes that "Front is founded on an ideal of creative freedom, sustained in an atmosphere of democratic discourse." The first issue, for Diller + Scofidio's exhibition, quickly sold out. It was followed by Front 2 "Building Projects" by Salter + Macdonald; Front 3 "Project DMZ"; and Front 4 "Reports of Exploration & Survey of the 35th Parallel". After issue 4 the publication stalled, with its resumption dependent on more dollars and production time, which are rare commodities at the gallery. Currently, reviving publications is a high priority and Storefront is preparing an illustrated history scheduled for publication in late 1991.

The explosion of exhibitions from '87 on has left Storefront with an unchallengable record for pioneering the new and emerging in art and architecture. Since that time, and in great part through a word-of-mouth network, Storefront has established its position as a local, national, and international destination, a

check-point of visual and textual information for people crossing town or continents. The strength of such a low tech, word-of-mouth reputation rests on past exhibitions and anticipation of equally exploratory ones. A partial list of late 1980's exhibitions makes this clear: '86-'87, Taeg Nishimoto, Gordon Gilbert, Kyong Park; '87-'88, Elizabeth Diller + Ricardo Scofidio, Salter + Macdonald, Lebbeus Woods, Kawamata, Coop Himmelblau; '88-'89, Michael Webb, Peter Cook and Christime Hawley, Steve Barry, Kaplan and Krueger, Imre Makovecz; '89-90, Neil Denari, Enric Miralles & Carme Pinos, Architekturboro Bolles Wilson, Zevi Hecker; and '90-'91: Dan Hoffman, Yukinori Yanagi, Luc Deleu, and Mel Chin.

Some exhibitions exceeded all expectations with a gallery packed by students taking notes and sketching, well-known commercial gallery dealers scouting prospective artists, famous architects straining at details, and critics muttering to themselves. Other exhibitions fell short or were too advanced for general appreciation. For example, Coop Himmelblau in effect turned the gallery interior into a fragment of a working-model, illustrating work and process, with large scale photocopies and small, electronic component-like models that confused most viewers who came expecting to see "architecture". Coop Himmelblau created a gallery-specific show/work that nevertheless eluded the visiting public's comprehension.

Equally valuable, important, and more comprehensible were Neil Denari's exhibition "Too Close: Cosmos Mechanicool" and "Centricity" by Lebbeus Woods. Woods took the gallery's main wall and bombarded it with drawings. Essentially he transformed the



wall into a sequence of visionary, technologically-driven urban/architectural views that, because of the mounting of drawings side-by-side, one over the other, created a cellular grid giving the viewer the options of cross-reading drawings with their top-or-bottom contiguous images, as well as reading and comparing images on a diagonal. Woods not only exhibited his technically accomplished drawings and his images extrapolated from science (making Akira's animated settings look comfy and hopelessly old fashioned), but also gave Storefront a system by which to read them. Whether looked at as cells of a film or of a comic book, the mounted drawings subverted the physical gallery space, transforming it from a passive viewing arena into an active venue of textual drawing serially distributed for speed reading or detail-by-detail study.

Not until Enric Miralles created a gigantic 90 foot-long Xerox photocopy, mounted as a frieze under the gallery's ceiling, making an architectural codex of his and Carme Pino's work, was the gallery so transformed. Yet the effect of Miralles & Pinos's exhibition was that of minimalism. The gallery looked almost empty upon entry. More closely scrutinized, the frieze became a physical metaphor, a gallery-specific design that connected Miralles & Pinos's use of photocopies in their work with the exhibition itself. It also functioned as a graphic project chronology, a continuous band of images signifying the temporal relation of projects below to one another. Underneath it, the Barcelona architects exhibited study and presentation models, prototype dining chairs, and intricate, fine-line, neo-modernist drawings whose presence was nearly invisible until one was face

to face with them.

More than the radical difference of intention and style between the Woods and Miralles & Pinos shows, what is worth noting is the fact that both were both presented in the same place, by the same people, and relatively close together. Extrapolating from just these two exhibitions, one can begin to see Storefront's willingness and ability to present diversity, to refrain from a party-line, and to create visual dialogue. (If descriptions of Storefront's exhibitions sound primarily architectural, modernist, and vaguely deconstructivist, that impression comes from my selection and personal interests. No such bias resides at 97 Kenmare. Since Storefront has continuously refused to settle in any particular camp, it is consistently nonconsistent--a positive attribute in my opinion. After nearly ten years there is no Storefront style. As Dodds put it: "No formula, no attempt at self-sensorship.")

Still one other, earlier exhibition radically manipulated the gallery space. In a sense Diller + Scofidio's exhibiton changed the Storefront's walls from solid support system for the mounting of works into a (metaphorically) perforated plane, a wall transformed by the placement of light devices--applied windows, devised peep-holes. By creating welded-steel and fluorescent light fixtures, each holding a series of 35mm slides depicting various projects, the architects required the viewer to come face to face with the devices, pick up a magnifying galss attached to them via cable, and peer into and through the slides. This installation of sculpture-like lighting fixtures--slideviewers, windows--transformed the visitor into a voyeur. It



presented the viewer with the ability to study photographed projects as well as Diller + Scofidio's use of material and method in small wall structures. This handling of details and materials further presented a snapshot-view of the architects' overall approach to sets, furniture, and buildings. It also hinted at the overall importance of window and screen as well as view, viewed, passive, active behavior in larger fields of the architect's occupation. As a centerpiece for the exhibition, Diller + Scofidio repackaged the innards of a television, subverting its standard image-projecting face by requiring one to view it from an angled, contiguous mirror-lid held to the metallic frame by a counterweighted hinge. To properly see the simulated-reflected image, one had to sit. For the real TV image the viewer/participant was forced to peer/peep down the device from a standing position. Spatial manipulation, viewer manipulation, was the order of these mastering designers.

Other exhibitions were poles apart yet transforming. Sculptor Steve Barry created a neo-constructivist machine that could be stood on as it lifted the viewer up and down, while in front triangular, propeller-like screens rotated on a central shaft, sprayed from behind with film images of a hand opening and closing. In the darkened gallery Barry's huge steel-tube machine-fabricated to fit Storefront's near-triangular shape--emitted an eerie sound and became an ominous metaphor of mechanical dependency, life on/within a machine. It was like an adult low-tech carnival ride (for an amusement park of the 21st century?) resonating with a social message. Thought of as a follie, it merits placement in Park Villette where it could play an

important intellectual foil to Tschumi's beautiful red masques.

Some recent exhibitions have stressed environmental degradation with the group show "Designs and Ideas for the Waste Stream" and earlier, Bente Stokke's installation of ash sprayed walls and a gallery filled with mountains of ashes; organic architecture had its day too, expressed in materials and neo-expressionist forms--spirals, abstract sunflowers--that inspired buildings and projects by Israeli architect Zevi Hecker. Even woody-goody, near-historicism has filled Storefront in the beautiful structures of Imre Makovecz, the Hungarian architect.

Today there is no other place open to the public in New York where one can walk in and have immediate access to a succession of such exhibitions or to a staff of this caliber. Park, Neshat, and Dodds are in the gallery all the time. They are Storefront's primary assets, exchanging information, fielding questions, developing contacts, surveying segments of current art and architecture. They constitute a human clearinghouse, act as advisors for architects looking for contacts, and for artists wanting to show work or propose shows. Such activities are costly and for the most part unappreciated and underpaid. Meaning that Storefront's staff works for minimum, obscenely low, wages. They are in effect the gallery's endowment, its source of wealth. Their role of living endowments is more plainly appreciated during economic down-turns like the recessionary climate now pervasive in the United States. Storefront is willfully open and functioning, planning next year's exhibitions, while across town and across the city other, larger, richer groups--galleries, dance companies, publishers--have been forced to close or



drastically redefine their operations.

As the National Endowment for the Arts directs greater amounts of money away from artists and small organizations in favor of larger grants to the States, as the country's pre-eminent government arts agency, The New York State Council on the Arts, faces budget cuts of 56% (reducing it to the level of 1971), and as New York City's Department of Cultural Affairs has ceased funding organizations like Storefront and faces the continued loss of millions of dollars as city services wither, Storefront somehow sacrifices and survives. In such a climate no one in New York's art world knows what will happen. Storefront has no long-term guarantee.

In a city whose cultural organizations are beset with financial gloom, Storefront recently exhibited renewed optimism, opening the first exhibition in the United States of the Belgian architect Luc Deleu. With the artist present for the installation and opening, Storefront presented an A+ exhibition. In models, drawings, and photographs, New Yorkers were given an opportunity to study Deleu's recent proposal for Barcelona housing--two identically massed structures, one standing like a building with set-backs, the other on its side, transforming the set-backs into cantilevered cut-outs and step-ups. In addition, Deleu presented his huge model and proposal drawings for recycling the vertical lift bridge over the Koningshaven (Rotterdam). In this project he replaced the bridge's roadway with a new structure, permanently lifted up, to house offices.

This exhibition illustrates the work of an important European little-known in the U.S.; it also visually signals

Storefront's determination to survive, illustrating the gallery's potential to galvanize artists and architects working on the fringes of today's acceptable styles and fashions, to talk with them, and, for some, to produce their works in the public's eyes. Storefront catches and keeps this attention by premeditated risk in its operation. If it has affected the programming and direction of organizations across the country in its first decade, it has only begun to set its own vision as the second nears. All indication is that the second will be as hard as the first. On the other hand, all indication is that Park, Neshat, and Dodds are better positioned, psychologically, politically, and artistically, to reinforce their past, to fight today's fight, consider tomorrow's, and point or lead to art, architecture, text, and discussion on its way into the 21st century.



DEAN'S :

I AM SENDING YOU THE WHOLE THING; I CAN'T REMEMBER  
EXACTLY WHAT YOU ALREADY HAVE. KYONG

DD. how do you see STOREFRONT's social activism continuing in light of its past--its work with the homeless or more recently with the environment?

KP. There is some division, both from responses to and participation in our program, between aesthetic and social issues that are present in STOREFRONT's activities. Some would prefer that we just concentrate on aesthetics, as they perceive that social issues such as homeless are beyond the realm of art and architecture, and is a manifestations of a greater forces such as economic, political and racial systems. I have heard some blunt statements like "architects are not social workers." Others are critical of the indifferent behavior of architecture in the light of social dynamics, or intensely critical to outright slaving of architecture to the interest of pure capitalism of urban and social environment of the contemporary culture and cities. These people strongly support to altruistic behavior of STOREFRONT in societal matters, and considered abandonment of pure and estoric inquiries in the theories of aesthetic as an important factor in evaluating ideas and works at STOREFRONT against the real world. I like the fact that STOREFRONT can keep our supporters, participants and audience in disagreements. This means that they are dialogues within and outside of STOREFRONT.

I also view that the separation between aesthetic and social is similar to the distinction between art and architecture as disciplines. STOREFRONT is unique as an organization for equally presenting works by artists and architects. I often find many artists are more interested in the works and ideas that are coming out from architects than they are with the artists. So STOREFRONT is a good place to see architectural ideas and works that are beginning to form, and artists benefits from our program by observing new resources that are present in the arts. Good examples of artists who are specially interested in our architectural programs are Dan Graham and Vito Acconci. But at the same time, architects are also considering art as legitimate methodology to explore disspassionate areas of architecture, such as materials, construction, conceptual and other sensations or thoughts that are potentially architectonic. I think Dan Hoffman, and team of Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio is good example of how important this can be. Recent rise of collaboration between artists and architects in projects, or artists working within architectural context and commissions, and architects working and presenting within art projects and exhibitions, are all signs of positive interfaces between art and architecture. May be in the future, similar discourses and collaborations could also develop between social and aesthetics works.



In the social area, project "Homeless at Home" between 1985-86, was the most encompassing one for us. Although we were not in any means problems solvers, or active participants in real terms to the crisis, we have acquired some important understanding about the problem, particularly in architecture. For example, many architects, with good intention, believed that the problem could be solved thorough architecture. Behind such thought lies on the fact that the most immediate and pressing problem with the homelessness is housing, and that meant there is direct relationship with architecture. But we often forget that buildings alone do not solve social, economic, political and racial conflicts, which I believe homeless is based on all of them. This can just simply proven by the demolition of \_\_\_\_\_ in St. Louis, and more recently \_\_\_\_\_ Housing in Chicago and \_\_\_\_\_ in Newark, where buildings were not the solutions, but containment for the institutionalization of the crisis in contium. First of all, the reason why these buildings were destroyed was not because they were not the solution to the problem, but because they were begining to pose danger to the dominant sector as a breeding ground of drugs, prostititution, crimes and AIDS, all potentially interventional to the pleasant zones. Nobody asks about where did the people who used to live there ended up, nor cared, the destruction of this community and its culture was the only objective.

But architecture, also architects, does have enormous relevance in the making of the crisis, infact we are more of the part of problems than the solutions. We have built hundreds of housing towers, destroyed many existing neghiboorhood in the intrested of urban renewal and maga-projects, and designed conversion of SRO hotels into luxury condos. You might say that we were social morticians, following the developed outlines of financial and political interests, building corridors and cells that are not unlike Italian cemetaryes, to lock people into a controlled environment of total destitute.

And this is whats happening again in New York, but now programatically more comprehensive. Our exhibition in November will present the works of Camillo Vergara, who has documented through photographs the transformativ decay of ghettos during the last 15 years. What he called as "the new ghettos", such as Mott Haven and East New York, is a highly concentrated ground where homelesses, homeless families, homeless mothers with childeren, homeless mothers with AIDS and childrens, homeless mothers with AIDS and childerens with AIDS, homeless and prostitutional mothers with AIDS and childerens with AIDS, crack addicts, methadone clinics and so on. I personally called this "New Jack Oder", which is a combination of "New Jack City", a controversial new film about life and story of drug gangs and saviors, and "New World Order", a controverisal new ideology about control and order of the world in the manner of Gulf War. I



see so much similarity between them two sphere, one urban and one global, in both cases are dominant order verses disadvantaged groups. Robert Vacca's idea of our age becoming a new Middle Ages, or Colombos notion of "Vietnamisation of the Territories" that incites the transforamtion of our cities into fortified collection and defence centers where private interests and self-administration led by private and mercenary forces in arms. I hope to generate a competition/forum project from the resources of Vergara's exhibition, about the future of cities and cultures.

DD. Can STOREFRONT be a relevant critic this far into such multipal and interrelated problems?

KP. Yes. I think it is more interesting, at least for me, to engage in these multiple realities of the contemporary culture, than just be feverish about oblique forms and linguistic structuralism. As millenium will end and begin, the spirit of society will look toward bigger questions and powerful ideas. And logistically, they require both oblique and bird's eye view if they are to have powerful ideology to manage daily toils. I know ideologies are in precess of erosion and distrust word wide right now, as one political system has been abandoned and the motives on the other is in question. I am aware that people are interested in "bread not ideologies." But this will change when the next millenium approaches. May be that will be the time when the next truly legitimate theory in art and architecture could surface, not from the forces within the discipline itself, but from the forces of cultural dynamics in accelerated transition where the disciplines must react to new set of realities. And there are signs today that indicates such thing could happen in the near future, as artists and architects are becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the limitation of their own disciplines, both in practice and theories, and their resources and practices are increasingly external from their own disciplines.

DD. If multiple and interrelated problems are relevant to STOREFRONT, what do you do to direct architect's visions to your program?--I guess the real question is can you engauge the architect as indiviudal artist and keep the outcome related to society? Can you tell us some of STOREFRONT's exhibits that you feel had this outcome?

KP. As far as the exhibitions of individual artists and architects goes, I don't interfere with their works. This is because I also believe that individualism, especially in architecture, is in short supply. In school, the works of instructors are much too influential for student's develop their own views, and for professionals, specialization and incorporation of the practices



induces limitation and compromises upon independent initiatives and productions. Its very difficult for individual to have either opportunity or time to develop personal language of forms or theoretical ideas that could be unique. Therefore, the notion of architect as individual artist is important, even if only psychologically, toward diversities in architectural thoughts and manifestations.

KP. Well, I think individualization, personalization and isolation of architectural development can lead to a collective manifestation of architecture into societal domains. For instance, I recall Lebbeus Woods always spoke about a notion of collective individualism. By that he meant that individualism and collectivism are not necessarily antithetical to each other, and on the contrary they are symbiotic to each other. Collective power is dependent to the level of individual strength, and individual works, no matter how private they may become, should never be isolated from the culture.

Projects and competitions of STOREFRONT is a collective forum, and unlike our exhibition of individual artists and architects, they are open to participation of many people. But the numbers of participants themselves can not insure that the forum will be successful. The power of the forum and its discourse is still dependent on the strength of individual works. Many of our projects are often theoretical and ideological, providing alternatives to commission orientated competitions, where pure ideas can be expressed in formal and theoretical manners. You might say that they are educational forum for those who have surpassed educational state, yet their professional role and status is not offering an experimental context to test their own intuitions into concrete forms. I believe that these projects and competitions of STOREFRONT help individual artists and architects in developing their works into mature forms. Therefore, STOREFRONT is not just an organization to present works, but is in an unofficial manner a post-graduate school for the continual education of artists and architects.

Even the exhibition of individual artists and architects are, when you look at them as a whole rather than individually, is a forum. And individually, I believe that they are all personally engaged in large questions of societal or disciplinary issues. Although Lebbeus Woods works within an extreme privacy, his works are visions of society in future. In fact, his future is the building of a society based on collective gains of knowledge and production in the fields of science and architecture. The cities in his drawings provoke an aura of medieval churches, as they too are the monuments of collective wills and actions. Except in his cities, the belief in religion has been supplanted by the power of knowledge. I can see his reverence toward how



science has been built upon collective frameworks , both as a discipline and industry, and suggests that architecture can also evolve in that manner.

DD. How have you kept STOREFRONT from representing one group or segment of architectural thought and thus taking on a "party line."

KP. Just as I spoke about the importance of independence of artists and architects, its equally important that STOREFRONT as an organization is independent from the tendency of the disciplines to establish aesthetic standards and biases. With this in mind, we have always pursued programs that are open and inclusive to varieties works. First, we sustain objective thinking within the subjective evaluation of aesthetics. This means that we have to be interested in many directions in architecture and not just one. Therefore, I have often presented works at STOREFRONT that I didn't like. And these exhibitions often turn out to be the most appreciated and rewarding ones. The exhibitions at STOREFRONT are not for me to enjoy, but they are to serve the audience. Thus, I have contained the subjective view of myself, to keep STOREFRONT objective and even independent from me.

Political manipulation of aesthetics is another factor that STOREFRONT has abstained from. This means 'camps' or 'party lines.' This is inheritant in all disciplines, because political associations, even carried out in social manner, is extermely beneficial to the success of individual or ideas. Futher more institutions and organizations, even social clubs, for instance the Century Club in New York, is ever convinient system that are already present to carry out politically driven aesthetics. The ultimate goal is to gain power on the individuals and their ideas, thats achieved through alliance of selected fews who are in position to contribute their own pieces of power bases to make one large one that they can share. Its almost like networking of computers, where small computers can gain the memory and speed of a very large one by sharing their individual capacity into one large one.

But this produces totalitarianism and exclusiveness in the field of aesthetic, which I believe should be fluid and open to accept and respond to the cultural forces that are constantly evolving and in transitions. Totalitarian methods are also very selective and impenetrable for any thoughts are individuals who are not in agreement with appointed idea. This also brings about a general enslavement of individual capacity, as totalitarian concept is to converse many followers through access to their benefits. This basically sums up many characteristics of the contemporary state of art and architecture, a highly encrusted environment that makes extremely difficult for the development of independent thinkings, especially for the younger generation. Recent portrail of architects as celebrities, as if they are movie



stars, are another new development in the mystification of leading architects.

DD. Do you feel or see that STOREFRONT has effected architecture at large? And if it does, in what form?

KP. STOREFRONT is an alternative to the mainstream notion and function of architecture. Diversity of works being present in our exhibition program proves that architecture is more open ended than we have been lead to or want to believe. There are also in fact diversity in the methods of works, and this is critically important to young practitioners who don't and unwilling to fit into existing model of practice. And furthermore, architecture, like other disciplines such as science, should have its own forum for experiments, or a laboratory for research and development on the future course the discipline may take. I believe that STOREFRONT is laboratory for architecture to support innovations and experiments.

DD. With all the programs that are designed to presents new ideas and works, does STOREFRONT in some ways functions to educate the next generation of architects, artists and designers? If so, do you think that by education, STOREFRONT supports the architectural community through its programs?

KP. You are absolutely correct in thinking that STOREFRONT is also an educational forum, or an unofficial school. No doubt that our program always contains critical concerns within the disciplines and culture. They are not only obsessions of our participants, but also important concerns and interest of our audience as well. In fact, the selection of our program is determined not only by the value of their formal strength, but also by their ideological bearings and obesessions that makes architecture a medium of their expression and not an end in itself. By having both, forms and theories, STOREFRONT as a forum gives a full educational value to our audience, and at the same time provides a much needed discourse between architects, and also architects with artists.

For the education of the next generation of architects, the exhibitions at STOREFRONT suggests to many young people that independent works in architecture is possible, and that they are alternatives to the corporate parctice of architecture. After graduations, schools are no longer accessble for furthering education and development of their works. They need a place outside the academic and professional system, where they can see experimental works, and interact with others with similar interests and



commitment for architecture. This is the forum that STOREFRONT is, where architecture can be learned, explored and criticized constantly.

Therefore, the competitions and the projects are specifically designed to provide opportunities for the next generation of architects to develop and present their own ideas. Beyond just seeing and become aware of other works that can inspire them, young people need something to work on as well. Our past projects such as "Adam's House in Paradise", "Before Whitney", "After Tilted Arc", "Homeless at Home", "Project DMZ", and "Project Atlas" were all site specific and issue orientated projects that were developed within STOREFRONT, and brought many significant works by young and unknown artists and architects. These projects are not only clear example of the educational function of STOREFRONT, but also were ways of showing to the architectural community that architecture is more than just making of buildings.

DD. How has the running of STOREFRONT affected your own architecture? Are you able to design? What are you designing? Where do you see your work going in light of your commitment to the gallery?

KP. Directing of STOREFRONT has not been without difficulties. What I call cultural production is seldom seen in functional value nor a necessity in the world that is dominated by the economics of consumerable productions. Well, STOREFRONT does not make products that are consumerable, instead it is designed to produce ideas, and the value of the products at STOREFRONT lies in the purpose to representation of ideas. In fact these products has almost no value as products.

However, being at the STOREFRONT more than anyothers, I have the best in this house of forum. I have a unique position to closely observe the works being presented here, and also can project some of my own ideas through developing the projects and the competition. I should also point out that STOREFRONT is also an informative meeting place for people, and often discussions on many critical subjects takes place at any time. They are significant aspect of STOREFRONT that could never be documented or made public, and can only be experienced by being here. These discourse are the daily life of STOREFRONT, and I am the one that benefits most from them.

No question that all the activities and programs of STOREFRONT has affected me very deeply, and its very difficult for me to distance my self from STOREFRONT in any way or in time. STOREFRONT is my own obsession, and under this condition it has been extremely difficult to pursue my personal works in architecture. However, I have been able to do few works, a series

of works called "Urban Arks", and another project that is quiet incomplete called "TWO CITIES AND TWO SOCIETIES: New York in Third Millenium."

An example where the activity of STOREFRONT has directly influenced my own works and ideas is Project Atlas, particularly a proposal for Nuclear Heritage Park made by Pearson Post Industries, a video presentation to create the world's first post-disarmament weapon technology family entertainment theme park. From this I became more and more interested in the military technology as the prime determinant of contemporary culture, began to study military 'artifacts', things like nuclear power plants, ballistic missile launch bases, defense radar stations, rocket propulsion facilities and other products, installations, systems and technologies that are both directly and indirectly linked with the development and application of the nuclear power and defense systems. Based on these, issues like the fragmentation and decentralization of contemporary cities and communities under the "bomb culture," or potential emergence of a community without the presence of living members, made of purely interactive images and manipulative memories, begins to interest me. Even a notion of city as a technologocial or military vessel, or the individual as a nomadic entity within universal hostility.

But all in all, STOREFRONT for now is my primary interest. Architecture needs an alternative forum that can be responsive and inclusive to the ever evolving dynamics of our culture. Without a structure to support theoretical, visionary and iconoclastic dimensions in the disciplines, architecture will remain inadaquet as a whole. We need to expand the horizon and the boundary of the discipline.